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SOURCE: CBLXSSO.006563

DRAFTED BY: EUR/FO:DFRIED -- 04/20/2009; EXT. 7-6760

APPROVED BY: EUR:ENETOS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/20/2029

TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM UNSC CY

SUBJECT: (C) The Secretary's April 20, 2009 Meeting with Cyprus Foreign Minister Markos Kyprianou

Ref: USUN 417

¶1. (U) Classified by: Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary, EUR, Department of State. Reason 1.4(d)

¶2. (U) April 20, 2009; 2:15 p.m.; Washington.

¶3. (U) Participants:

U.S.
The Secretary
Assistant Secretary Daniel Fried
Executive Assistant to the Secretary Joe MacManus
NSC Director for Aegean and Caucasus Affairs Maria
Germano
Acting Spokesman Robert Wood
Cyprus Desk Officer Eleftherios Netos (Notetaker)

CYPRUS
Foreign Minister Markos Kyprianou
Ambassador Andreas Kakouris
Director of the Office of the Foreign Minister Kornelios
Korneliou
Deputy Chief of Mission Yannis Michaelides
First Secretary Solon Savva

SUMMARY

¶4. (S/NF) SUMMARY. Republic of Cyprus (RoC) Foreign Minister Markos Kyprianou told Secretary Clinton that President Christofias remains committed to a Cyprus settlement and also seeks to strengthen bilateral relations with the United States. While Kyprianou repeated familiar Greek Cypriot (G/C) opposition to timelines and arbitration, he conceded "a sense of urgency." He added that he believed Turkey genuinely seeks a solution on Cyprus and suggested Ankara help by publicly bolstering Talat and publicly committing itself in favor of a bizonal, bicommunal federation. Kyprianou expressed concerns over "rumors" that the UN planned to

reduce its force and stressed the importance of maintaining its current strength. He also sought U.S. support for an early UNFICYP rollover before Turkey assumes the Security Council presidency in June. Though the Secretary agreed that a reduction in the force strength was not a good idea, she did not commit on moving the rollover date. Subsequently the Turks also suggested moving the date forward (see reftel).

Kyprianou emphasized the RoC's desire for deeper ties in a number of areas and attributed strain in U.S.-RoC relations in recent years to G/C opposition to what it viewed as the previous U.S. administration's unfavorable stance on the Cyprus Problem. Kyprianou also asked the United States to publicly boost Christofias, including by arranging for a meeting with President Obama. The Secretary agreed that the G/C and T/C leaders are to be commended, but did not commit to a meeting between Presidents Obama and Christofias. The Secretary also asked the RoC to discretely urge Lebanese Christians not to support in parliamentary elections a coalition that includes Hezbollah out of a fear that Christians would be shut out of power otherwise. END SUMMARY.

ASSESSMENT OF THE TALKS

¶5. (C) Kyprianou said that resolution of the Cyprus Problem remained the RoC's "biggest issue" and emphasized the commitment of President Christofias to the current process, which he characterized as "moving slowly." However, Kyprianou reiterated G/C opposition to timetables and arbitration, citing the experience of the failed Annan Plan in 2004 which he said was "done in good faith, but didn't work." Picking up on this theme, the Secretary outlined what she saw as the T/C perspective of five years of frustration since their "yes" vote in 2004, noting how pro-settlement forces, including T/C leader Talat, had paid the price for the lack of a settlement in T/C "parliamentary" elections the day before. The Secretary acknowledged G/C opposition to pressure and timelines, but emphasized delay was working against a settlement. Kyprianou conceded a "sense of urgency" existed, but contended some of the T/C proposals did not comply with a bizonal federal framework, without providing any examples. A federal system should lead to integration, not separation, he argued. The Secretary suggested working with UN Special Advisor Alexander Downer on demonstrating what a bizonal, bicommunal federation would look like in practice.

¶6. (C) Kyprianou expressed G/C opposition to any change in the size of the UNFICYP force (currently around 800) and asked for U.S. support to roll over the mandate ahead of Turkey's June presidency of the Security Council. The Secretary agreed that a reduction in the size of the force would be ill-advised at present, but did not commit to an early rollover. Convinced that Turkey genuinely favored a resolution of the Cyprus Problem, Kyprianou suggested Turkey publicly move to bolster Talat, especially in the wake of hardliners' April 19 election triumph in the north. Turkey could also provide explicit public support to the process by using the phrase "bizonal, bicommunal federation" rather than speaking in terms of "two states" and "two co-founder peoples," Kyprianou asserted. He also called on the United States and other outsiders supporting the process to show G/Cs that a solution would benefit them. He asked the Secretary for help in boosting Christofias's position and asked for a meeting between Presidents Christofias and Obama. The Secretary noted this request, but did not commit to a meeting.

BROADENING BILATERAL COOPERATION

¶7. (C) Citing Cypriot assistance with the 2006 non-combatant evacuation from Lebanon and with non-proliferation efforts, the Secretary expressed a desire to broaden our bilateral cooperation, though she noted this also would require President Christofias to shed some of his traditional "anti-imperialist" views. She added that Cyprus could do more on energy security. Kyprianou agreed on the need to increase cooperation. Characterizing Christofias as "very realistic," he noted that recent tensions in U.S.-RoC relations stemmed from G/C opposition to what it viewed as the previous administration's negative stance on the Cyprus Problem. As an example of Christofias's pragmatism, Kyprianou cited the former's reaction when, as Speaker of the Cyprus House of Representatives, he acquiesced to U.S. use of Cypriot air space for military operations in Iraq in 2003. Kyprianou further claimed he had the ear of his president, asserting that one of the reasons the communist Christofias selected him, a center-rightist, to be his foreign minister was because he "wanted a different perspective on international relations."

¶8. (C) Kyprianou cited the Middle East and counterterrorism as areas where he would like to see increased cooperation, suggesting the United States and Cyprus pursue a memorandum of understanding to further guide bilateral dialogue. The Secretary said she would like to explore this idea further. Kyprianou also added that he would like a relationship with "no surprises," claiming the government found out about the Secretary's meeting with Talat from press reports. He had no problem with the meeting taking place, but said the government should have known before it hit the airwaves. On trafficking in persons, Kyprianou expressed his hope that Cyprus's recent reforms would be included in the forthcoming report. Finally, he noted Cyprus's desire to join the Visa Waiver Program, noting that Cyprus is in the final stages of issuing a contract for production of biometric passports.

URGING LEBANESE CHRISTIANS NOT TO BACK HEZBOLLAH

¶9. (S/NF) Kyprianou concluded by asking if there was anything the RoC could do for the United States. The Secretary said the RoC could help in Lebanon. She expressed hope that Lebanese Christians would not be fooled into voting for a Hezbollah coalition in Lebanon, even though it includes General Aoun. She urged Kyprianou to use any contacts the RoC might have -- inside and outside the Government of Lebanon -- to persuade the Christians that they should be extremely careful and to not choose to support a coalition that includes Hezbollah out of fears that they would be isolated or excluded. Kyprianou said the RoC would work on that discreetly.

CLINTON